

Message Text

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54

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /028 W
----- 012869

R 131530Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0779

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

COMNAVFORCARIB

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRIDGETOWN 0888

EO 11652: NA

TAGF: PGOV, PFOR, PINR, PINT

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION WINS ANOTHER BY-ELECTION

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. THE OPPOSITION BARBADOS LABOUR PARTY ON MAY 12 WON THE BY-ELECTION FOR THE BRIDGETOWN CONSTITUENCY OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. MISS BILLIE MILLER, A 32 YEAR OLD LAWYER, BEAT THE RULING DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY'S CANDIDATE LYLE CARMICHAEL. THE BY-ELECTION BECAME NECESSARY WHEN A BLP MEMBER, ELLION MOTTLEY, ACCEPTED THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFER OF THE CONSUL GENERALSHIP IN NEW YORK, AN ASSIGNMENT HE ASSUMED LAST MARCH.

2.. MILLER IN HER FIRST CONTEST FOR ELECTED OFFICE SCORED A SOLID VICTORY OVER CARMICHAEL, WHO HAS BEEN RUNNING AND LOSING IN ELECTIONS FOR HOUSE SINCE 1961: SHE GAINED 54 PERCENT OF THE VOTE (1,872 VOTES) TO CARMICHAEL'S 40 PERCENT (1,398). ALL THREE MINOR PARTIES IN THE RACE DID POOLY: AL GILKES OF THE PEOPLES PRESSURE GROUP, WHO HAD THE SUPPORT OF ERIC SEALY AND HIS PEOPLES PRESSURE MOVEMENT, RECEIVED 80
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VOTES, CARL MOORE OF THE POPE'S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT 56

VOTES AND ERNEST "CALLEY" MOTTLEY 16. OF THE CONSTITUENCY'S
5,691 REGISTERED VOTERS, 61 PERCENT CAST BALLOTS.

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COMMENT: THERE WAS LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN THE PLATFORMS OF THE
CANDIDATES OF THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES: BOTH RECOGNIZED THE
APPALLING LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE CITY RESIDENTS AND PROMISED
IMPROVEMENTS. MILLER'S VICTORY IS PROBABLY DUE LARGELY TO A
GENERALIZED DISCONTENT WITH THE RULING DLP AFTER ITS 15 YEARS
IN OFFICE AND A DESIRE TO SEE WHAT THE OPPOSITION CAN DO. THE
DLP FEAR, THE BLP AND THE POLITICAL OBSERVERS SURMISE,
THAT THIS IS AN ISLAND-WIDE ATTITUDE. THEREFORE ALTHOUGH THE
RULING PARTY'S NUMERICAL STRENGTH IN THE HOUSE HAS NOT BEEN
DIMINISHED BY THIS BY-ELECTION, THE DEFEAT IS A SEVERE BLOW
TO THE DLP BECAUSE IT CONFIRMS A TREND THAT WAS INDICATED LAST
FEBRUARY WHEN IT LOST THE EARLIER BY-ELECTION.

IN AN APPARENT DESPERATE EFFORT TO AVERT DEFEAT AND THEREBY
HALT THE DOWNWARD TREND OF HIS POLITICAL FORTUNES, PRIME
MINISTER ERROL BARROW IN THE WEEK BEFORE THE ELECTION RESORTED
TO THE DEVICE OF RUNNING AGAINST THE UNITED STATES. HE ACCUSED
THE US OF ATTEMPTING TO "DE-STABILIZE" THE GOVERNMENT OF
BARBADOS AND THEN LINKED THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATE WITH THE
CIA (WITHOUT ANY CONVINCING EVIDENCE FOR HIS ACCUSATION).
BARROW MAY HAVE LEARNED HIS LESSON: THE ELECTORATE IN GENERAL
WERE DISINTERESTED IN THE ISSUE, IN FACT DID NOT TAKE IT
SERIOUSLY, THE POLITICALLY CONSCIOUS SMILED AT THE CRUDITY OF
BARROW'S ATTEMPT AND SOME OF THE DLP MEMBERSHIP WINCED.

HAVING LOST, THE EXPECTATION IS THAT THE RULING PARTY
WILL WAIT UNTIL THEY ARE REQUIRED TO DO SO IN DECEMBER BEFORE
CALLING GENERAL ELECTIONS. AT THIS POINT, THE DLP'S CHANCES
OF WINNING THE ELECTIONS ARE PROBABLY LESS THAN 50-50. THE
GOVERNING PARTY ENJOYS TWO SIGNIFICANT ADVANTAGES, HOWEVER:
IT CAN IMPROVE ITS POSITION THROUGH USE OF PATRONAGE AND
ADOPTION OF MEASURES DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THE LIVING STANDARDS
OF BARBADIANS AS A WHOLE, OR SELECTED GROUPS, AND IT CAN
DECIDE THE TIMING OF THE ELECTIONS BASED ON ITS OWN ASSESSMENT
OF ITS POSITION AND THAT OF THE OPPOSITION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, OPPOSITION PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 MAY 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BRIDGE00888
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760187-0210
From: BRIDGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760560/aaaabyvl.tel
Line Count: 107
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 APR 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <02 APR 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OPPOSITION WINS ANOTHER BY-ELECTION BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED
TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, PINR, PINT, BB
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006